

HARDYKNUTE.

A

SCOTTISH FRAGMENT.

See PERCY'S ANTIEN'T BALLADS, Vol. 2. P. 94. Edit. 2.

by Lady Wardlaw

Born Elizabeth Halket

N. B. Modern spelling is substituted for the Ancient.

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M. A. R. D. Y. K. W. U. T. I.

SCOTTISH F. G. L. I. T.



M. E. H. M. A. R. D. Y. K. W. U. T. I.

1. P. M. A. R. D. Y. K. W. U. T. I.

H A R D Y K N U T E.

A S C O T T I S H F R A G M E N T.

STATELY stept he east the wall,
 And stately stept he west;
 Full seventy years he now had seen,
 With scarce seven years of rest.
 He lived when Briton's breach of faith 5
 Wrought Scotland mickle woe;
 And aye his sword told to their cost,
 He was their deadly foe.

High on a hill his castle stood,
 With halls and towers on height; 10
 And goodly chambers fair to see,
 Where he lodged many a knight.

His.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

V. 1. to v. 33. I had once thought that this fine fragment of genuine heroic poetry, was imperfect at the beginning as well as at its conclusion; but I am now inclined to a different opinion. The composition is of a very peculiar nature, and seems to be the effusion of another Stesichorus, who in the judgment of Quintilian,* sus-

A

tained

* Stesichorum quam sit ingenio validus, materię quoque ostendunt: maxima bella et clarissimos canentem duces, et *epici carminis onera lyra sustinentem*. Quintil. l. 10. c. 1.

4 H A R D Y K N U T E.

His dame so peerless once and fair,
 For chaste and beauty deem'd;
 No equal* had in all the land,
 Save Eleanor the queen.

15

Full thirteen sons to him she bare
 All men of valour stout;
 In bloody fight with sword in hand,
 None lost their lives but doubt.†
 Four yet remain; long may they live
 To stand by liege and land;
 High was their fame, high was their might,
 And high was their command.

20

Great

* Marrow. *Orig.*

† Without contention and bravery.

COM M E N T A R Y.

tained on his lyre the weight of epic poetry. It appears to be of the epico-lyric kind, blending in some degree the characters of each of these species and thereby affording an uncommon pleasure to the reader. The Poet filled with his subject bursts forth at once in the praises of his hero, without even informing us of his name. He describes him as vigorous in a green old age, *frosy but kindly*. His gallant achievements against the enemies of his country, the situation of his stately castle, the number of his family, the matchless attractions of his queen, the valour of his sons, and the rare beauty of his daughter

form

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 5

Great love they bare to *Fairly-Fair*, 25

Their sister soft and dear;

Her girdle shew'd her middle gimp,

And golden glist her hair.

What woeful woe her beauty bred!

Woeful to young and old; 30

Woeful I trow to friends and kyn*

As story ever told.

The king of Norfe in summer tide,

Puft up with power and might,

Landed in fair Scotland the isle, 35

With many a hardy knight.

The

* Kyth. Orig.

COMMENTARY.

form the opening of the piece; and the reader is given to expect a future relation of the miseries which were occasioned by the charms of his daughter Fairly-Fair, which would probably have formed a kind of episode, but is now unfortunately lost.

I think this introduction is of a lyric nature. V. 33. to v. 53. We are now informed of the subject-matter; namely, the invasion of Scotland by the king of Norway. As soon as the king of Scots hears of his arrival, he is represented as behaving with a spirit and resolution worthy of his high station. He orders his steed to be got ready

A 2

and

The tidings to our good Scotch king,
 Came, as he sat at dine,
 With noble chiefs in brave array,
 Drinking the blood-red wine.

40

"To horse, to horse, my royal liege,
 Your foes stand on the strand;
 Full twenty thousand glittering spears
 The king of Norfe commands."

Bring me my steed of dapple grey,
 Our good king rose and cried;
 A trustier beast in all the land
 A Scots king never tried.

45

Go little page, tell Hardyknute,
 That lives on hill so high,
 To draw his sword, the dread of foes,
 And haste and follow me.

50

The

COMMENTARY.

and with alertness commands one of his pages to repair instantly to Hardyknute to inform him of the invasion. This is the first time the name of Hardyknute is mentioned, and the poet raises a high idea of his hero's character, by representing the king of Scots as turning without a moment's hesitation to this powerful baron for assistance.

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 7

The little page flew swift as dart,
 Flung by his master's arm;
 Come down, come down, lord Hardyknute, 55
 And rid your king from harm.

Then red red grew his dark-brown cheeks,
 And red his dark-brown brow;
 His looks grew keen, as they were wont,
 In dangers great to do. 60
 He's ta'en his horn, as green as glafs,
 And given five founds so shrill,
 That trees in green-wood shook thereat,
 So loud rang every hill.

His

COMMENTARY.

V. 53. to v. 113. The page is now dispatched, and without any circumlocution we are informed of his arrival at Hardyknute's castle, by hearing the short speech of the page to him. This I think is conceived with great force. The appearance of Hardyknute on the receipt of this message is described in a stile and spirit worthy of Homer. He is conscious of his own importance, and of the necessity of obeying instantly the call of his Sovereign. He changes colour, and his *dark brown brow*, (the *κυανειαι οφρυνες** of the Grecian) reddens at the thought of the high exploit he was about to undertake. He then sounds his horn and summons his sons to attend

A 3

him.

* Hom. II. I.

2 H A R D Y K N U T E.

His fons in manly sport and glee 65
 Had past that summer's morn ;
 When low down in a grassy dale,
 They heard their father's horn.
 That horn, quo' they, ne'er sounds in peace,
 We've other sport to bide : 70
 And soon they hied them up the hill,
 And soon were at his side.

Late, late yester* ev'n I ween'd in peace
 To end my lengthen'd life ;
 My age might well excuse my arm 75
 From manly feats of strife.
 But now that Norse does proudly boast
 Fair Scotland to inthrall,
 'Tshall ne'er be said of Hardyknute,
 He fear'd to fight or fall. 80

Robin

* The Zestrene Orig.

C O M M E N T A R Y.

him. On their arrival, Hardyknute makes a speech expressive of his high-born spirit, and declares that though his age might well excuse him from the perils of war, yet he cannot bear to remain inactive, when his king and country claim his assistance. He now speaks to his fons each by his name ; and we are informed of their specific qualities ; that Robin was famous for his skill in arch-

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 9

Robin of Rothsay, bend thy bow,
 Thy arrows shoot so liel ;
 That many a comely countenance
 They've turn'd to deadly pale.
 Brave Thomas ; take you but your lance, 85
 You need no weapons more,
 If ye fight with't as you did once
 'Gainst Westmoreland's fierce heir.

And Malcolm light of foot, as stag
 That runs in forest wild, 90
 Get me my thousands three of men
 Well-bred to sword and shield.
 Bring me my horse and harnessyne,
 My blade of metal clear ;
 If foes kenn'd but the hand it bare, 95
 They soon had fled for fear.

Fare-

COMMENTARY.

archery, Thomas, for wielding the lance, and Malcolm for swiftness of foot. The old man prides himself in such a generous progeny ; and reminds one of the psalmist :
 “ Like as the arrows in the hands of the giant, even so
 “ are the young children : happy is the man that hath
 “ his quiver full of them ; he shall not be ashamed when
 “ he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

" Farewell my dame, so peerless good,
 (And took her by the hand)
 Fairer to me in age you seem,
 Than maids for beauty fam'd." 100
 My youngest son shall here remain,
 To guard these stately towers,
 And shut the silver bolt that keeps
 So fast your painted bowers."

And first she wet her comely cheeks, 105
 And then her boddice green,
 Her silken cords of twirtle twist
 Well plett with silver shene ;
 And apron set with many a dice
 Of needle work so rare, 110
 Wove by no hand, as you may guess,
 Save that of Fairly-Fair. And

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The venerable warrior then addresses himself to the female part of his family, and in affectionate terms takes leave of his peerless dame, now fairer in his eyes, though stricken in years, than when in the bloom of youth. He tells her, that he will not leave her defenceless, but that her youngest son shall stay behind and guard the castle. His dame is described as manifesting a mutual affection, and we have a picture given us of her dress, heightened by one endearing circumstance, namely, that it was woven by the hand of her own daughter,

Ver.

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 11

And he has ridden o'er moor and moss,
 O'er hills and many a glen,
 When he came to a wounded knight 115
 Making a heavy moan.

"Here must I lie, here must I die,
 By treachery's false guiles;
 Witless I was, that e'er gave faith
 To wicked woman's smiles." 120

"Sir Knight, if you were in my bower,
 To lean on filken feat
 My Ladies' kindly care you'd prove,
 Who ne'er kenn'd deadly hate.
 Her self would watch you all the day, 125
 Her maids at dead of night;
 And *Fairly-Fair* your heart would chear,
 As she stands in your fight."

"Arise

COMMENTARY.

Ver. 113. to ver 145. Hardyknute now sets off; but as he was journeying on his way, he came to a place where he saw a wounded knight who lay on the ground making heavy lamentations. This forms a beautiful little episode, and gives an unexpected variety to the narration. He offers the knight any assistance in his power, tells him that he might choose any of his attend-
 ants

" Arise, young knight, and mount your steed,
Full lowns* the shining day ; 130

Choose from my menzie† whom you please,
To lead you on the way."

With smile-less look and visage wan,
The wounded knight replied ;

" Kind chieftain your intent pursue, 135
For here I must abide.

To me no after day, nor night
Can e'er be sweet or fair ;

But soon beneath some dropping tree
Cold Death shall end my care." 140
With

* Shines,

† Retinue

C O M M E N T A R Y.

ants to lead him on his way ; nay, that he was welcome to lodge in his own castle, and assures him that his own wife and daughter would foster him, and pour balm into his wounds, till he should be restored. The Knight returns him thanks for his courtesy, but declines accepting his offer, declaring it his intention to wear away his wretched existence in that solitary waste.

Hardy,

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 13

With him no pleading might prevail ;
 Brave Hardyknute him to gain
 With fairest words and reason strong
 Strave courteously in vain.

Since he has gone far round about* 146
 Lord Chattan's land so wide ;
 That Lord a worthy wight was aye
 When foes his courage fied.
 Of Pictish race by mother's side
 When Picts ruled Caledon, 150
 Lord Chattan claim'd the princely maid,
 When he sav'd Pictish crown.

Now with his fierce and valiant† train,
 He reach'd a rising height ;
 Where broad encamped on the dale, 155
 Norse Army‡ lay in fight,
 " Yonder

* Hynd attowre. *Orig.* † *Stalwart. Orig.* ‡ *Menzie. Orig.*

COMMENTARY.

Hardyknute finding that he could prevail neither by *fair words* nor *reason strong*, pursues his road.

Ver. 145. to ver. 185. The warrior and his company now arrive at Lord Chattan's territories, and in the true spirit of Homer, we have a character drawn of this noble chieftain, his generous lineage and warlike achievements; for no personage is mentioned in this fragment without

“ Yonder my valiant fons and fierce
 Our raging foemen* wait,
 On the unconquer'd Scottish sword
 To try with us their fate.

169

Make orisons to him who sav'd
 Our souls upon the †rood;
 Then bravely shew your veins are fill'd
 With Caledonian blood.”

Then forth he drew his trusty blade, ‡
 While thousands all around
 Drawn from their sheaths glanc'd in the sun,
 And loud the bugles found.

165

To

* *Revers. Orig.* † *Cross.* ‡ *Glaive. Orig.*

C O M M E N T A R Y.

without some account of his character. Hardyknute now reached a rising height of ground, whence he descried the encampment of the Norwegian army. As soon as he viewed it the poet represents him, (by that beautiful figure used by Milton and other great writers, abruptly, without introduction) the poet, I say, represents him as addressing his valiant attendants and directing their eyes towards the enemies of their country. But to shew the holy spirit by which he was animated, before he bids them exert their native courage, he exhorts them to make orisons to the Saviour of the world, who died for them on the cross. At the conclusion of his speech Hardyknute draws

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT 15

To join his king adown the hill,
 In haste his march he made ; 170
 While, playing war-tunes,* minstrels meet
 Afore him stately strade.
 Thrice welcome valiant stoup† of war,
 Thy nation's shield and pride ;
 Thy king no reason has to fear ; 175
 When thou art by his side :

Then bows were bent and darts were thrown,
 For throng scarce could they flee ;
 The darts clove arrows as they met,
 The arrows dart the tree. 180
 Long did they rage and fight full fierce,
 With little scathe to man ;
 But bloody bloody was the field,
 'Ere that long day was done.

The

* *Pibrochs*. Orig.

† Pillar.

COMMENTARY.

draws his sword, while thousands around him at the same instant *glanced in the sun*, and the trumpets found a blast, to compleat each circumstance of glorious preparation. We have now a full picture of martial array ; Hardyknute hastens to join his king, and minstrels *stately stride* before him, playing war-tunes, and celebrating the fortune of the king of Scots in having such a champion to maintain his cause.

We

The king of Scots that feldom brook'd 185

The war that look'd like play ;
Drew his broad sword and broke his bow,
Since bows seem'd but delay.

Quoth noble Rothsay, " mine I'll keep,
I wot it bleeds a score ;" 190

Haste up my merry men, cried the king,
As he rode on before.

The king of Norse he fought to find
With him to mence the faught*
But on his forehead there did light 195
A sharp unlucky† shaft :

As

* To begin the fight. † Unfonfic. *Orig.*

COMMENTARY.

We are now hurried into the midst of the battle, in the true lyrical spirit ; javelins and darts hurtle in the air with the confused noise and throng of the contending armies ; though as yet no great carnage had ensued. Ver. 185. to ver. 224. The poet here paints the king of Scots as a man of true courage, ill brooking the flow execution done by the arrows, and wishing to engage sword to sword. However Hardyknute's son, Rothsay, refuses to lay aside his bow, well knowing his peculiar skill, and hereby a propriety of character is preserved.

The King of Scots rides up to meet his royal Norwegian antagonist, but an unlucky shaft stopped him in his career,

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 17

As he his hand put up to find
The wound, an arrow keen,
Oh woeful chance! there pinn'd his hand
In midst between his cyne. 200

Revenge, revenge, cried Rothsay's heir,
Your mail coat shall nought bide
The strength and sharpness of my dart;
Then sent it through his side.
Another arrow well he mark'd, 205
It pierced his neck in twa;
His hands then quit the silver reins,
He low as earth did fa.*

"Sore bleeds my liege, sore sore he bleeds!"
Again with might he drew 210
And gesture dread his sturdy bow,
Fast the broad arrow flew.

Woe

* Fall.

COMMENTARY.

career, though he was not fatally wounded. Rothsay, perceiving the enemy who shot the dart, calls out, Revenge, revenge, and dispatches two arrows which slew the warrior who wounded the king of Scots.

Rothsay, though in the midst of his fury, yet turns aside to make a short pathetic exclamation over his bleed-

Woe to the knight he ettled* at ;
 Lament now queen Elgreid ;
 Hie dames, to wail your darling's fall, 215
 His youth and comely weed.

" Take off, take off his costly jupe
 (Of gold well was it twin'd,
 Knit like the fowler's net, through which
 His steely harness shin'd :) 220

Take, Norse, that gift from me, and bid
 Him venge the blood it bears ;
 Say if he face my bended bow,
 He sure no weapon fears.

Proud Norse with giant body tall, 225
 Broad shoulder and arms strong,
 Cried, " Where is Hardyknute so fam'd,
 And fear'd at Britain's throne :

Though

* Aimed

COMMENTARY.

bleeding sovereign, and instantly dispatched another arrow, which drew many a tear from dames who were enamoured of the youthful knight it slew. He orders his jupe or garment to be stripped off the corps, which apparel is described with the minute exactness of Homer, and sends it to the king of Norway, all stained with gore as it was,
 and

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 19

Though Britons tremble at his name,
I soon shall make him wail, 230
That e'er my sword was made so sharp,
So soft his coat of mail."

That brag his stout heart could not bide,
It lent him youthful might :
" I'm Hardyknute ; this day, he cried, 235
To Scotland's king I hight"
To lay thee low as horses hoof ;
My word I mean to keep.
Then with the first stroke e'er he struck,
He made† his body bleed. 240

Norse' eyne, like grey goshawke, star'd wild ;
He figh'd with shame and spite :
" Disgrac'd is now my far-fam'd arm,
That left thee power to strike."
Then

* Promised.

† *Garr'd.* Orig.

COMMENTARY.

and bids him avenge the death of the warrior. Ver. 225 to 256. Now the giant king of Norway appears in all his might, and vaunting his own prowess calls aloud for Hardyknute to engage with him and laughs at the name which Britons trembled at. The spirit of Hardy-

B

knute

Then gave his head a blow, so fell 245

It made him down to stoop,
As low as he to ladies us'd
In courtly guise to lout.

Full soon he rais'd his body bent,
His bow he marvell'd fair; ‡ 250

Since blows till then on him but dar'd,
Like touch of *Fairly-Fair*.

Norse marvell'd too as sore as he,
To see his stately look;
So soon as e'er he struck a foe, 255
So soon his life he took.

There,

‡ Sore.

COM M E N T A R Y.

knute burnt within him, and seconded a noble answer to the Norwegian vaunt by as noble a stroke. The king of Norway sigh'd, *with shame and spite*, and the description of the behaviour of the combatants is such, that the war seems *to grow darker at their frown*.

V. 256. to v. 288. This Poem being a fragment, I am not certain whether some intermediate stanzas are not lost in this place; in which the death of the king of Norway was described, as it is afterwards alluded to. The reader perceives that the spirit of the poem requires, that

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 12

There, like a fire to hether* fet,
 Bold Thomas did advance;
 A sturdy foe, with look enrag'd
 Up towards him did prance. 260
 He spurr'd his steed through thickest ranks
 The hardy youth to quell,
 Who stood unmov'd at his approach,
 His fury to repell.

" That short brown shaft so meanly trimm'd, 265
 Looks like poor Scotland's geer;
 But dreadful seems the rusty point!"
 And loud he laugh'd in jeer.
 " Oft Briton's blood hath dimm'd its sheene,
 This point cut short their vaunt." 270
 Then pierc'd the boaster's bearded cheek;
 No time took he to taunt.

Short

* Heath-broom.

that he should supply many intermediate ideas. We are next presented with a combat between Thomas, the second of Hardyknute's sons, and a sturdy young warrior of Norway. The taunt cast on Thomas by his adversary, and the reflections on the nakedness of Scotland are well conceived and expressed. The young Norwegian however soon fell beneath the hand of the son of Hardy-

B 2

knute,

Short while he in his saddle swung,
 His stirrup was no stay;
 So feeble hung his unbent knee, 275
 Sure taken he was fey.*
 Then on the hardened clay he fell;
 Right far was heard the thud; †
 But Thomas look'd not as he lay,
 All weltering in his blood. 280

With careless gesture, mind unmov'd,
 On rode he north the plain;
 His seem ‡ in throng of fiercest strife,
 When winner aye the fame.
 Nor yet his heart dame's dimpled cheek 285
 Could move soft love to brook;
 'Till vengeful Anne return'd his scorn,
 Then languid grew his look.

In

* i. e. He was predestinated to death.

† Sound.

‡ Appearance.

COMMENTARY.

knute, whose character is amiably portrayed by his not glorying over the fallen foe, nor expressing the least surprise at his success in war: careless and unmoved in the midst of battle, and after conquest his appearance the same.

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 19

In throes of death, with faded cheek,
 All panting on the plain, 290
 The fainting corps of warrior lay
 Ne'er to arise again.
 Ne'er to return to native land
 No more in blithesome sounds
 To boast the glories of the day, 295
 And show their shining wounds.

On Norway's coast the widow'd dame
 May wash the rocks with tears,
 May long look o'er the shipless seas,
 Before her mate appears. 300
 Cease Emma, cease, to hope in vain;
 Thy lord lies in the clay;
 The valiant Scots no foes permit*
 To carry life away.

There

* Nue revers thole. Orig.

COMMENTARY.

fame. The poet adds, he was never subdued by the power of love, till the fair Anna returned his scorn, but then his look shewed signs of submission. I conceive that in this place also some stanzas are lost, in which the universal rout of the Norwegian army was described, as I think the transition is too abrupt from this last passage to the succeeding lines.

V. 289. to v. 312. These verses, which I am now considering, I conceive no poet of antient or of modern fame

There on a lee, where stands a cross 305
Set up for monument;

Thousands full fierce that summer's day
Fill'd keen war's black intent.

Let Scots, while Scots, praise Hardyknute,
Let Norfe the name ay dread; 310
Aye how he fought, oft' how he spar'd,
Shall latest ages read.

Loud and shrill blew the whistling wind;
Sore beat the heavy shower;
Murk grew the night, e'er Hardyknute 315
Was near his stately tower.

His

COMMENTARY.

same ever surpassed, either for the pathos of the sentiment or the dignity of the expression. It would be needless to enlarge on the beauties of this passage, in which the conclusion of the bloody contest and its fatal consequences are so forcibly described. But as to the character of the great Hardyknute, the poet has conveyed more in a single line, than he could have done in thousands; "*Ay how he fought, oft' how he spared;*" thereby exhibiting the character of a perfect hero. He could

A SCOTTISH FRAGMENT. 25

His tower that us'd with torches' blaze
 To shine so far at night,
 Seem'd now as black as mourning weed ;
 No marvel fore he sigh'd. 320

" There's no light in my lady's bower,
 There's no light in my hall ;
 No blink* shines round my *Fairly-Fair*
 Nor ward stands on my wall.
 What bodes it? Robert, Thomas, say ;"— 325
 No answer fits their dread :
 " Stand back, my sons, I'll be your guide ;"
 But by they pass'd with speed.
 " As

• Torch.

COMMENTARY.

could not have concluded this part of his poem more nobly.

V. 313. to the end. When the battle was finished, Hardyknute and his sons repaired home to his castle ; but ere they had reached the spot they evidently perceive that some unexpected disaster had happened in their absence. The towers were not blazing with the accustomed light, nor was there a signal of joy and satisfaction to be seen ; all was dark and dreary. The anxiety of the aged warrior and his sons is highly pictured ; and he who could
 with.

"As fast I've sped o'er Scotland's foes"—

There ceas'd his brag of war;

330

Sore sham'd to mind ought but his dame,

And maiden *Fairly-Fair*.

Black fear he felt, but what to fear

He wist not yet with dread:

Sore shook his body, fore his limbs,

335

And all the warrior fled.—

* * * * *

COMMENTARY.

Withstand a thousand foes undismayed, is represented as sinking under the weight of domestic calamity, for we find *that all the warrior fled*. * * * * I dare say every reader laments with me, that the injury of time, or whatever the cause may have been, has deprived us of the remaining part of this singularly beautiful poem, which the uncommon powers of the composer could not but have rendered in the highest degree interesting and affecting. *Quisquis ille, qualiscunque, fletur*: but though probably we shall never be able to ascertain its real author; yet be he antient or modern, his work must for ever be read with pleasure, and his genius revered; for we must universally acknowledge, that in his exalted spirit *the pure well-head of poesy did dwell*.

P. S. A second part has lately been published, but it is so inferior, that it cannot be esteemed as the production of the same pen.

F I N I S.

